



MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID

Fact Sheet

Mental Health First Aid in Maryland

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the initial help given to someone developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis before appropriate professional or other assistance, including peer and family support, can be engaged. Under the leadership of Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Secretary John M. Colmers, the state of Maryland is one of the first to adopt this program in the United States.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

This 12-hour course teaches people how to give first aid to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis situation and/or who are in the early stages of a mental health disorder. Participants will learn the signs and symptoms of the most common mental health problems, where and when to get help, and what type of help has been shown to be effective.

Mental health problems covered are depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and self-injury.

Crisis situations covered include suicidal behaviors, acute stress reaction after a trauma, panic attack, acute psychotic behavior, and drug overdose.

Participants learn to use the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan:

- A**sses risk of suicide or harm
- L**isten non-judgmentally
- G**ive reassurance and information
- E**ncourage the person to get appropriate professional help
- E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies from peers, family, and friends.

AIM

This course is designed to increase mental health literacy, to decrease stigmatizing attitudes in our communities and to increase appropriate and early help-seeking by people with mental health problems.

Certified MHFA/USA Instructors deliver the 12-hour course, which can be scheduled flexibly. To become MHFA/USA Instructors, individuals successfully complete an intensive five-day course.

HISTORY

In 2001, Betty Kitchener and Professor Tony Jorm developed the initial Mental Health First Aid Training and Research Program in Australia. The program is currently available in Australia, Canada, England, Finland, Hong Kong, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Singapore, and Wales.

DEMONSTRATED RESULTS

Evaluations of MHFA in Australia have demonstrated participant benefits which include:

- Better recognition of mental health problems,

- Greater understanding and utilization of evidence-based treatments,
- Reduced stigma surrounding mental illnesses,
- Increased confidence in providing help to others, and
- Greater amount of help provided to others in the six months following the course.

MHFA Regional Coordinators are housed at local Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) Chapters. To request trainings in your community contact:

Central Maryland: Erin Leatherwood
(eleatherwood@mhamd.org, 410-235-1178 x202)

Metropolitan DC: Rachel Larkin, LCSW
(rlarkin@mhamc.org, 301-424-0656 x517)

Western Maryland: Amy Thompson
(athompson@fcmha.org, 301-698-4975)

Eastern Maryland: Tina Mills,
(tmills@mhamdes.org, 410 822-0444)

For general information on Maryland Mental Health First Aid, please contact:

Elle Trusz (etrusz@mhamd.org, 410-235-1178 x221, 410.235.1180 fax) or send mail to:

MHFA
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Maryland Mental Health First Aid, an initiative of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Maryland Mental Health Transformation Office, is conducted in partnership with the Mental Health Association of Maryland, to ensure a compassionate and effective response to Maryland citizens experiencing a mental health emergency.

